

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

A LIFE THAT LASTS | CHURCH IN THE WILD – PART 1

CHAD LUNSFORD | JULY 21, 2024

Video of Carli

Growing up I had this notion that to be a God fearing woman you had to always be joyful and content, always. No matter what you put on that smile, especially at church. You know, when someone asks how you are, you say, “Good. God is good. Life is good.”

Caption:

Perspective: a true understanding of the relative importance of things, a sense of proportion.

Carli

Jordan and I got married in 2021. Church was a non-negotiable. We started attending Traders Point. We knew that it was a large church so we were going to have to get involved.

The first thing that we wanted to do was serve. We wanted it to be immediate and we knew that obedience leads to blessing. But the crazy thing is at the same time we were experiencing some hardships and trials that we’d never faced.

We got married and Jordan ended up getting really sick on the third day of our honeymoon, which ended up leading to a six-month journey of him being bed ridden, hospitalization. That was a hard first six months.

And then we felt this call to start with the Fishers launch team. Then we both decided to do Rooted. And from there that stemmed to small group.

We moved into this Awaken series and Jordan and I both felt called to give a certain amount. We wanted to be obedient. And literally the next day Jordan loses his job, not to mention we’re both going through this two-year journey of infertility right now so, literally it was like, “Okay. We’re being obedient, God.”

We continued to take a step of faith. And then we’d face another trial. It doesn’t make sense. You know, we’re hurting. I felt like I had to keep it together, I had to be the encourager, I had to always be joyful. And, you know, to all my other family, believers, and friends it was like, “It’s going to be okay because I love the Lord, Jordan loves the Lord. He’s going to take care of us.”



And deep down I know that He will. But behind closed doors, you know, when Jordan wasn't around I'm on my knees crying and just hurting.

When you're always trying to come off like you have it put together, it actually takes away from some real, authentic relationships that you could build and it takes away from just that vulnerability that actually is needed in the church.

And Jordan and I did not steer away from that. We needed group. We were honest. And I think that is what built our group up and made us all stronger—just being real and sharing how we are feeling and that life is hard but we're not going to stop.

We're not going to stop being faithful to the Lord. He will bless us somehow. We learned that in Awaken. We don't know how, but we're going to trust in Him.

Caption:

In the fall of 2023, Aaron shared a vision for our church.

Aaron:

I think there is some awakening that God wants to do in your life. There is a very active enemy advancing against you. And if you are a threat to Satan, then he throws everything that he has against you. And if the world looks at the church and the church is asleep or they just see a bunch of legalistic, religious people we'll miss it.

What we have to do is we have to be awakened to the voice of God and recognize that now is the time for us to say, individually, God, everything that I have is Yours.

Carli

When the Awaken series started, I thought I was awake. I'd been faithful my whole life. The awakening that God had for me was being real and authentic with others and with God and telling Him how I feel. We're not called to just go to church and just attend it, but really called to be a part of it.

Some of the women in my small group meant a lot to me. They were really influential in my life. Allowing them to pour into my life as I was battling, feeling down and sad and angry and confused, they just continued to encourage me.

And now we want to pour out to others as they poured into us. And I'm going to get to pour into these kids and say, "Yes, we're called to be joyful in all circumstances, but we can also go to the Lord and tell Him how we feel."

I can just give Him my whole self and be authentic and I hope that that makes a difference in someone else's life. The church is for the broken. It's okay if you don't have it all together. God just wants all of you.

End Video



Chad

Isn't that amazing? Come on church. Can we celebrate what God's doing?

Well, I'm so honored that I get a front row seat each and every week to what God is doing in the lives of Carli and Jordan.

And I'm so excited that I have the opportunity to share with you all today. Welcome to all of the campuses and those of you watching online. If we haven't had an opportunity to meet, my name is Chad Lunsford and I get the privilege of being the campus pastor for our newest Traders Point location, our Fishers campus. Good morning to everybody in Fishers.

I'm so excited that I get the opportunity to share with you today. As we've been reminded already today, back in the fall we began this two-year journey called Awaken, inviting God to work in us and inviting God to work through us.

And church, I just want to celebrate with you. It is because of your generosity that back in January we launched the Fishers campus with nearly 1,000 people. Isn't that amazing? It's incredible.

And each and every week, because of you, we are seeing lives changed. There are so many other stories over on the northeast corner of town, just like Jordan and Carli's. So, I just wanted to say thank you.

As we get started I also want to say, I love that I get to be a part of this church. I feel so honored to be a part of a team that is dedicated and talented. I'm grateful for Pastor Aaron who leads with such wisdom. He communicates from this platform with grace and truth.

I know so many of you at all of our campuses believe this, but God's hand is truly on this church. He's doing something special. And I never want to take it for granted. Come on. Can we just celebrate what God is doing here? Yeah.

Well, today we're continuing in our series called Church In The Wild. We're learning from the apostle Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. And we're asking ourselves this question: what would it look like for us to be the kind of church that the world is desperately needing?

In just a moment we're going to turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 3. We're going to start toward the end at verse 18. And then we're going to back up and see what Paul has to say to us. Paul is going to teach us today that we need to be mindful of the kind of life that we are living.

I just had a birthday about a week-and-a-half ago. And I don't know about some of you, but with each birthday I recognize that they are coming faster and faster. Anybody know what I'm talking about?



So, I have this question that is really fresh on my mind. And it's this. With the brevity of life, what kind of life can I build that will outlast me? And Paul, he's inviting us to ask a very similar question today: will the days we live here on earth pass with us or can we live in such a way that our lives would echo into eternity.

Now, Paul doesn't want us to look at the world around for guidance, rather, Paul would say, "I want the world around to look at you and say, 'Those Christians, those people who are following Jesus, they know something that we don't.'"

What we're learning in 1 Corinthians is that Paul is saying, "The problem is the world is looking at you, but you're starting to look a lot like the world." So, Paul is saying, "I need you to begin living with the end in mind if you're going to get this life right."

In verse 18 he has this really important warning for us. He says this:

"Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God." 1 Corinthians 3:18-19a (NLT)

Paul says, "Stop deceiving yourselves thinking, 'Well, everybody in the world is doing it. If I'm walking around and everybody is doing it, that must be the way I should live.'" And the reality is that all of us at various times in our lives can be deceived if we are not careful.

Have you ever realized that you and I, we can tell ourselves some pretty crazy stories, can't we? Our minds can run wild if we are not mindful of what's going on up there. Let me give you a funny example in my own life.

Several years ago our family was living just north of Los Angeles in downtown Pasadena. It's a beautiful city. Maybe you've seen it on TV with the Rose Parade.

Part of what I loved living in Los Angeles is that there was always something happening. In fact, most mornings I would turn on the TV and there would always be this car chase, this high speed car chase on the interstate from the night before.

You've seen these. Right? I love the thinking behind them. There is somebody, they've done something wrong, and in their infinite wisdom, they're like, "I am going to be the first one to finally out run the LA police force." Right? "Me and my four wheels and all of them with their cars and helicopters and the news helicopters—I'm going to do it. I'm going to be the one."

And I love that moment where the thinking is, "If my car can't outrun them, what am I going to do? I'm going to ditch the car and I'm going to hoof it on my own two feet." And then they try to outdo it. And they never do. The helicopters follow them and they always get caught.

Also, most mornings I would go for a really early morning run. I always loved to do this in downtown Pasadena, kind of before the city would wake up.

On this particular day I ran out to a little town called San Marino. I was running back through the college campus of Cal Tech and I could hear the familiar hum of a helicopter overhead, but there were so many trees on the college campus that I couldn't see them.

When I got back into the city, I looked up and sure enough there was a helicopter directly above me. It was so close it felt like I could touch it. Well, as I started running north on Lake Avenue, I began to get concerned because step for step the helicopter was following right over me.

So, I'm starting to think, "There must have been a high speed car chase on the 210 freeway." It wasn't far from us and our apartment complex. "They'd come into the city, they ditched the car and they are running and at any moment I'm about to be on TV. And I'm not going to be the sucker, I'm going to be the hero." So, I start running with my fists. I'm ready to take somebody out.

I got up to the main intersection in the city on Colorado Boulevard, where they have the Rose Parade, and I look up and to my surprise there is now not one, there are actually four helicopters that are circling directly over me. And I'm thinking, "This is it. They are after someone. I wonder who it is?"

You guys are laughing. You know where this is going.

I turn and I'm running down Colorado Boulevard to get back to our apartment. And I look up and see one of the helicopters gets out of formation and, again, one of them is following me step for step.

I'm now thinking, "Not only are they looking for a bad guy, they think I'm the bad guy." Right? This was not going well. So, then I become the bonehead thinking, "I'm going to be the guy. I'm going to outrun the police. Here we go."

I'm running to my apartment as quickly as I can. And I'm not making this up. When I get to the steps of our apartment complex (there are several buildings) I run up and a fifth helicopter emerges on the other side of one of the buildings. It sits overhead. And I'm thinking, "This is when I die. This is it. This is the moment. They are going to rappel out. They are going to take me out."

I rush into the apartment and the helicopter zooms off. It was kind of wild. I run in. My back is aching. I can't breathe. My legs are about to fall off. And I notice my wife is just right inside the door. I'm like, "You're not going to believe what's happening outside."

She said, "I know. I've been watching it on TV." And I'm thinking to myself, "You've been watching me on TV?" She keeps going. She says, "There was a car accident on the 210

freeway. Every news helicopter in the city is covering it. In fact, about the time you were coming up the steps, they were just taking somebody off of the interstate and they are medevacking them to the hospital.”

And I’m bent over. I can’t breathe. And I just look up and I’m like, “I know. That’s exactly what I thought was happening outside. I had no other thoughts.” I was too embarrassed for years to tell her that I had a different story in mind.

Have you ever noticed that you and I, we can tell ourselves some pretty crazy stories? I laugh when I think about it because everything that happened in the story was 100 percent real, but the story in my mind that I constructed was 100 percent false.

Paul has this warning for us today. He says, “I don’t want you to get to the end of your life and realize you’ve been telling yourself a story. I want you to start learning to live with the end in mind.”

And if you’ve been trusting the world’s ways and the world’s wisdom you’ve been believing a crazy story. So, Paul challenges us to ask ourselves, “Am I being deceived? Am I building a life that will pass with me or one that will echo into eternity?”

You know this to be true. It can appear like we’re getting ahead in this life and Paul says, “But take warning. It could appear that way, you get to the end, you’ve actually missed it.”

So, Paul wants us to know there is going to be a final test. The good news is Paul is like, “I want to tell you the answers to the test right now so that you can pass.” In fact, we’re going to back up to verse 10 and let Paul guide us to a life that will outlast us. He says this in verse 10:

“Because of God’s grace to me…”

We might want to skip over those words, we shouldn’t. In fact, we’re going to come back to them at the very end. Paul says:

“I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful.” (NLT)

Now, we’re going to spend the majority of our time with those words today: we must be very careful. But before we do, I want to sit on this idea that Paul is talking about—the foundation. He goes on in verse 11:

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.” (NLT)

Paul is telling us anything instead or in addition to Jesus is not a foundation. There is only one foundation. And it’s Jesus. He was the perfect Son of God. He came and lived a sinless life. He was placed on the cross for you and for me. He was dead and He was

buried. He was placed in the grave. And by the power of the Holy Spirit He was resurrected.

And any one of us who place our faith in Him will be saved. And he says, "That is the foundation. There can be no other foundation but that."

And yet Paul would say, "Before I met Jesus, I had another foundation." Paul was a Pharisee. And he would say, "I placed my faith in," or, "I put as my foundation my ideology and the zeal with which I was following it."

Then he says, "I came face to face with Jesus and recognized that my ways were foolish and I was actually deceiving myself."

Anything instead of or in addition to Jesus is not a true foundation. And, yet, plenty of us will build our lives on other things. Anything instead of or in addition to Jesus is not a foundation.

So, within these Scriptures there is an early challenge that Paul has for us. It's this:

Upon what or who are you placing the weight of your life?

Upon what or who are you placing the foundation of your life? You can lay no other foundation but Jesus. And the really great news today is that if you discover that you've been placing your weight on someone or something, you can get that right today. Today, during our gathering, you can set that straight.

Back in verse 10, Paul says, "Others are building on this foundation." But we must be very careful how we build. He goes on in verse 12:

"Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials..."

Now we need to be very clear what Paul is talking about when he says materials. When he's talking about materials he's saying it's what you and I do with our lives, the quality of the materials are the quality of the lives that we live. Look at what he says:

"gold, silver, jewels," that's a type, there is another type, "wood, hay, or straw." (NLT)

These are different levels, different qualities. Now, to be clear, Paul is not talking about salvation now. He was when he was talking about the foundation and now he's talking about what we do with our lives.

In fact, all of us some day will stand before God. And God will ask us two questions. This is the final test. Question one: What did you do with My Son? I sent Him to die for you so you wouldn't have to pay for your sins. Did you place your faith in Him?

Pastor Ryan was talking about this last week. We have to lay down our pride and recognize, "I need help. I'm a sinner in need of a Savior. Only Jesus is that Savior."

This question is question one: What did you do with My Son?

The second question is: What did you do with what I gave you? What did you do with what I gave you?

He goes on to say this in verse 13:

"But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done."

He's giving us a bit of an eerie illustration. We need to see what he is saying here. He's like, "If your lives were to construct a structure and someday it's placed through the fire, the quality of the life that you live will show on the other side."

"When the flames finally die down, what remains will show: did your life have value or did it not?" The fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done.

"The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward." 1 Corinthians 3:13-14 (NLT)

There is a judgment coming. There is a final test. Paul says, "I want you to pass. And, oh, by the way, if salvation wasn't enough, your good God wants to reward you in eternity for the kind of life that you lived here on earth."

Well, how do you have that kind of life? Paul's teaching is, "When you align yourself with God's ways and God's plan you will live a life of great value and your good God, He wants to reward you forever."

But there is a warning. In verse 15 he says this:

"But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss."

In other words, the materials that you use didn't make it through, they just passed with you. He says:

"The builder will be saved,"

Again, this is not about salvation. Jesus is the foundation, the Chief Cornerstone. You can't overturn His work. You will be saved:

"but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames." (NLT)

The question that we will be asked is: What did you do with what I gave you?

Now, Paul is going deep. He's getting very real with the church in Corinth. And he's saying, "To get this life right you've got to live with the end in mind." In other words, there is more to this life than just this life. See, what Paul understood is this:



What you believe about eternity shapes how you live today!

What you believe about eternity shapes how you live today. Let me show an illustration to help us understand it. Pastor Aaron has used something very similar to this before. This line or this rope represents the scope of eternity.

God has existed before us. He creates us. That's what this dot right here represents [a small red dot], it's our time on earth, it's creation. It's the brevity of our lives. And God invites us to live on into eternity with Him.

So, the questions are: What did you do with My Son?

That determines where we spend eternity. And God says, "I want you to answer, 'I gave my life to Jesus.' I sent Him for you so that you wouldn't have to pay for your sins." That's where we will spend eternity if we are a follower of Jesus.

There is a second question: What did you do with time that I gave you?

Did you construct your life with quality materials? Did you recognize that what you do in the dot impacts the line? "If you'll build your life on Me, if you'll construct your life with quality materials, I want to actually reward you forever." Because what you believe about eternity shapes how you live today.

And Paul, he wants us to recognize who we get to be as the church. Look at what he says in verse 16 he says:

"Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?" (NLT)

All of us at all of the campuses, every church on the planet that places their foundation on Jesus He says, "All of you, wherever you are, not just in the church building, but wherever you are, you are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit is in you."

And he says something really fascinating. When he uses the word temple. That's our English translation, but he's not just referring to any building. He's very specifically referring to a place. He uses the Greek word *naós* and in Greek that's referring to the place in the temple that is the Holy Place. And even more specifically it is the Holy of Holies.

Why is that important? Because the Holy of Holies represented the presence and the glory of God. So, when Paul says that you are and I are the presence and the glory of God, he's saying, "Do you realize who you are in the world? There is no one else like you on the planet."

Wherever you go, the Holy Spirit of God goes. People will never be the same if you will recognize who you are. How you live in the dot will change the line forever for so many people.

Yeah.

And then he doubles down in verse 17. He says:

“God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple.” He’s talking about you. “For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” (NLT)

You are that naós, you are that presence and glory of God wherever you go. He’s saying, “You’re holy.” In other words, you are set apart. There is nothing like us on planet earth. He’s placed us here to make the world different and better.

“So, upon this foundation go and build, go and create, go and make the world better. Don’t be deceived.” Right? “Don’t live to look like the world. Make sure you live to be the light for the world. That’s who you are. That’s what I made you to be.”

And that brings us to where we started with verse 18:

“Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world’s standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise.” (NLT)

Become a fool by the world’s standards so that you can live the life that will outlast you. He’s saying the world is living in such a way that they think the dot is all there is. They don’t even recognize that there is a line.

But you go live in the dot and make sure everybody knows that there is a line and the way you live will help them come into the light. It will change them forever.

So, how do we do it? What does this kind of life look like? Well, later in the letter Paul tells us. Now, we call it chapter 13. Paul wouldn’t have. He was just continuing his thoughts in chapter 13, verse 13. You’ve probably heard this verse at a wedding It says this:

“Three things will,” what? Do you see it? “last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.” (NLT)

In other words, build your life with these materials.

Now, what we’ve been learning the past few weeks is that Paul is correcting the Corinthian church. Let me show you a church that Paul writes to. He’s actually commending them. He’s telling them that they are getting it right. The church in Thessalonica, his first letter to them, chapter 1, verse 3:

“We remember before our God and Father your work produced by,” do you see it? “by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NIV)

Paul is writing to them and saying, “Guys, you’re doing it. You’re building on the foundation of Jesus. You’re constructing your lives with quality materials. Your lives are

going to outlast you. Keep going. So, we need to look at them and say, "What were they doing? How do we build our lives with these three materials?"

Here's what I want to do with the remainder of our time. I want to give us one thing that we can do with each of those materials to live the kind of life that will outlast us. It's not meant to be an exhaustive list.

These are just three examples. But I believe that if we were to commit to all three of these things we'd not only have a full life, we would have a beautiful life. We'd construct the kind of life that Paul is talking about that will outlive us.

Now, I need to say that there is nothing mysterious or mystical about them. In fact, they are quite plain. The power is when we put them into practice, when we actually begin committing our lives to them. Here's the first one:

Inspire faith by sharing what Jesus has done for you.

Now notice I didn't say become a theologian. I didn't say take Bible literacy courses. Both great things. But do you realize that you, not just somebody sitting next to you, you can inspire faith by sharing with somebody else, "This is who I was, and this is what Jesus is doing in me."

Look at what Paul says in his next letter to the church in Corinth. He says this:

"We are Christ's ambassadors. God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God.'" 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NLT)

I wonder if we recognize that God has us set up with divine appointments. That He puts people in our path so that they come across us. Why? Because we're the presence of the glory of God. We're His ambassadors. He's making His plea through us to other people.

So, we are in our neighborhoods, we are in our places of work, we are in our schools, we are where we are because that's where God needs us, that's where He wants us to be in contact with people. He wants to get their attention and say, "I want you to be in the line with me so pay attention, pay attention to what My children are telling you. Come back. Come back to Me."

Let me give you an example from my own life. A little bit of context is helpful to kind of set the scene. For the better part of the last year I've been undergoing some medical treatments for this ongoing back and neck pain.

And when I go in they hook me up with something very similar to an IV. I'm kind of connected to this machine for at least 60, sometimes up to 90 minutes. And most times I have the same nurse so we've gotten to know each other quite a bit because we'll spend quite a bit of time together.

Earlier this spring when we were sitting there, I was hooked up to the machine, I just sensed the Holy Spirit saying, "You need to tell her about Jesus." And I'm like anybody else. I'm like, "Are you sure, God? I'm hooked up to a needle. She can do anything she wants. I'm kind of at a disadvantage."

I just felt the Holy Spirit say, "No, no. Lean in." So, I just started praying like, "Well, what's my way in? How do I say something?" I get nervous just like anybody else.

So, we're kind of catching up on one another's lives and she asked the question, "So, what's new with you?" Well, earlier this year I actually published my first book. And while we were sitting there I got a message from my publisher that the book was doing well.

So I was like, "Well, turns out I'm an author and the publisher is really reaching out to me as we speak and saying, 'The book is doing well.'"

And she asked the question, "What's the book about?" And the Holy Spirit was like, "Now. This is your moment." And I was like, "Well, the book is called *Made for More: Reach Your Highest Purpose, Live Your Greatest Story*."

"It's about how to pursue Jesus with all you've got. He'll get you to your purpose. The problem is that most of us stop short whenever we run into obstacles. But if you keep pressing on in Jesus, He'll get you the life that you were created to live."

Now, I remember asking her this question. "Do you ever feel like you are made for more?" And she just started sharing her story and I shared mine. I was just sharing some of the miracles that God has done in my life. I was just trying to do it very kindly. And if I'm being honest, I really didn't know what she thought about the conversation.

So, when I came back in a month-and-a-half later, I was like, "This could be interesting. She's going to put a needle in my arm. We'll see how this goes."

And after I'm connected to the machine she sat down and she said, "Hey, I feel called to tell you something?"

"Well, that's some interesting language. What do you mean?"

She said, "After our last conversation I want you to know that you inspired me." She said, "For years, because of some of the things that happened in my past, I've pushed God away. But when I was driving home after our conversation, I told God that I wanted to give Him another chance."

Incredible.

And she said, "I went home and told my husband about our conversation, some of the stories you were sharing and that I wanted to give God a chance." And he said, "Well, you're not going to believe this but when I was driving around in the truck today, I felt the same thing. It's time to give God a chance."



She said, “That week a friend called us out of the blue and invited us to church. And we not only went to church that day, we haven’t stopped going to church since our conversation,” which is just amazing.

And I wonder, what divine appointments does God have in front of you?

Now, I’m telling you about the one that I got right. I’m not going to tell you about all of the times I missed it. Right?

But what if you were to sit down today before your head hits the pillow and just write out a list of the people who might be divine appointments in your life—people you come into contact with, the people who are around you. Because God wants you to be His ambassador to them.

If you just started praying over those names, “God, would you give me opportunity to share with them what you are doing in my life.”

And I love how Pastor Aaron says it. He says, “Do so in winsome ways.” Right? Don’t be weird. Just share what God has been doing in you. I was this, and this is what Jesus is doing in me.

I think Paul is saying, “Live in such a way that the earth is crammed full of heaven so someday heaven is crammed full of the people of earth.” Paul said, “Get this right.”

Here’s the second thing:

Point to the hope of Jesus by serving others

Point to the hope of Jesus by serving others. Do you realize that God our Father loves it when His children serve His children? When you serve other people, God is smiling over your life. Why? Because you’re taking care of His kids.

Jesus says it like this:

“Whoever would be great among you must be a servant... Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve to give His life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:26-28 (ESV)

There are so many in this world who are seeking their own way. And Jesus is saying, “Not so with you. You carry the presence and the glory of God when you walk in. You don’t have to be served. You get to serve others.

“And you get to have other people recognize that they don’t have to be served, they can be free from that selfishness and they can serve others as well.” And in doing so you’re pointing to the hope of Jesus.

Maybe you’re asking yourself, “In what way can I begin to serve that would make a difference?”

I want to highlight for a moment something that has been going on throughout the summer. God has been working in a special way in our children and our youth throughout the summer.

Do you know that between Kids' camps and our Youths' camps that Traders Point, together, we have sent 839 kids to camp? Isn't that amazing—839.

Of those 201, I love the one, God knows every single one—201 have said, "I want to go all in with Jesus and step into the waters of baptism." Just an amazing number.

Also amazing, 240 of those kids raised their hands and said, "I want to be a kingdom worker. I want to be a kingdom bringer in my home and in my school, wherever God has me."

And I want to celebrate this number big. Total number of adult leaders 247. Come on. Let's celebrate that—247 adults who said, "You know what? I don't need my comfortable bed at home. Give me a bunkbed at camp." Right?

"I've been spoiled by air conditioning. Give me the heat. I don't need my comfortable car, just give me a seat on a bus." I mean, people who gave up their time, they gave up their week, they probably had to use vacation to do it, but said, "You know what? I want to get this right.

"I want to make sure the kids know about Jesus. I want to make sure that they recognize that there is going to be a final test that I want to help them pass. So, I'm going to make sure I live here in such a way that it impacts the line,"—247 adults who gave of themselves." And I'm sure it was tough.

Maybe you're asking, "I want to make a difference as well." I want to encourage you to go to our serve page on our website tpcc.org/serve. All kinds of opportunities to serve all throughout our church—opportunities to serve across our city through our missions partners.

But maybe you're even saying, "If God's moving like that with kids and youth, they scare the heck out of me, but I want to serve them anyway." Right? Sign up. Reach out to the youth pastor, reach out to the kids' director and say, "Hey, help me understand what it would look like to walk alongside youth."

Here's the third thing:

Reflect God's love by generously giving to others.

Reflect God's love by generously giving to others. Now, you may question, "How does love connect to generosity?" But I want to argue that most of you already know this because it's hidden in plain sight in one of the most famous Scriptures in all of the Bible, John 3:16:



“For God so loved the world,” that He what? He gave. “he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (NIV)

Out of His extravagant love, God gave. He gave us His ultimate treasure—His Son.

Which is this great reminder that some of us get a little squirrely when we talk about generosity because we think it’s all about our treasure; it’s all about our finances. It does include our finances but it’s so much bigger than that. Right?

God’s teaching us—Jesus—you could never put a price on that. So, the message is, if you want to live a life that outlasts you, well then generously give your life to others. Follow in the example of our Heavenly Father who gave Jesus to us.

It could include our treasure. It can also include our time. Just the time that we spend... The world is going so fast. What if we just slowed down with the people around us and just generously give them our time.

We can also generously give of our talents. And I beautifully saw this recently in a really tragic situation. Just across the street from our house in our neighborhood, a young woman suddenly, unexpectedly passed away one evening. She left behind her husband and her very young daughter.

In our house we were talking, “What can we do? We want them to know that we love them. We want them to know God loves them. We’re here for them. What can we do?” And we were talking about it as a family.

And my 14-year-old, Ella, she just jumped up and said, “I’m going to make them cookies,” which is something Ella can do. Not something dad can do. But she just goes over to the pantry, she gets in the fridge. A couple of hours later, voilà, there were cookies.

Can I just tell you how proud I was of my box of cookies walking over to our neighbors? I was about to have a really hard conversation, but I was so glad that I was able to give him a gift because it came from her talents.

Later that evening he texted me just to say, “Hey, please tell Ella the cookies were amazing. Me and my daughter loved them.”

I don’t know if that little girl will remember that gift for the rest of her life, but can I tell you this? Ella’s earthly father and her heavenly Father will remember it forever. I think it’s one of those acts that will echo into eternity.

Here’s what I think. I think all of us want to be generous. We have this idea of what it could be like to be generous. But usually we get held back thinking well, “If I give, I now have less.”

But what the Scriptures actually teach us is this, “I’ll never miss on earth what I invest in eternity. I’ll never miss on earth what I choose to invest in eternity.”



And I wonder who's waiting to experience God's love through your generosity? Who has God put in your path so they can experience God's love through something that you are going to share with them?

Church, can I invite us to stand together as we close in prayer? And as we do, I want to share this. I know something that is true of you because I know it's true of me. With the time I have on this earth, the time that God has given me in the dot, I want my time with my wife and my kids to not pass away with me. I want them to echo into eternity.

I want the time that God gives me with my family, with my friends, to not stay here. I want it to outlast me. I want to get it right. I want my time here in the dot that He gives me with people where He says, "I want you to impact and I want you influence for the kingdom." I don't want it to stay here. I want the dot to impact the line.

So, Paul says, "Don't be deceived. Make sure that you're focusing on what really matters. Build your life with quality materials because what you believe about eternity shapes how you live today." So, he says, "Share—share what Jesus is doing in you." Point to the hope of Jesus by serving others; give generously so that people can experience the love of God.

Today, maybe somebody here is a lot like me. When I was preparing this week and I was praying I was like, "God, You're stepping on my toes a little bit." There are some areas in these Scriptures that I feel like there is a gap between where I am and where I want to be."

And God took me back to those first words in verse 10. Remember what Paul said? Because of God's grace. Maybe somebody needs to be reminded of that today.

Maybe your like, "There is a big gap between what you're saying and where my life is." And I would just point you to what Paul said, "It's because of God's grace that he was able to do that. Paul called himself the greatest of all sinners. And he said, "But, listen. We can learn to live with the end in mind. But we can only do it with God's grace."

Can we pray together?

Jesus, we thank You for Your extravagant love for us. We thank You that You came down and showed us what it would look like to live a life full of faith, hope, and love.

And, God, for those of us today, myself on the top of that list, who recognize, "There are some gaps here and I want to get them right," we're leaning into You.

As we're praying, if that is you, here at Northwest, at any of our campuses, would you just tell God right now that you need Him? Would you just say, "Lord, I want to get this right? God, help me to live here on earth in such a way that it doesn't stay here but it echoes into eternity?"



Maybe you need to say, "God, help me to see the people that you have placed into my life as divine appointments. God help me to see where I can serve and make a difference. God help me to see how I can live with the kind of generosity that You gave to me."

As we pray today, maybe there is somebody here, you recognize that your life is not built on the foundation of Jesus, but you don't want to walk out of those without getting it right.

So, today, if you recognize that it's your day to begin following after Jesus, in your own heart would you pray something like this:

"Jesus, I need you. Jesus, I love You. I recognize that I am a sinner in need of a Savior. Jesus, I believe that you are that Saviour. So, today I'm turning from my ways and I'm turning to You. And from this day forward I want to follow You all the days of my life."

Maybe you pray something like this, "Jesus, I know I can't do it alone. Would Your Holy Spirit come and fill me up?"

God, I know that You are smiling over us, all of these folks who are praying and are leaning into you and saying, "God, I want to get this right. I want to build on the foundation of Jesus.

"I want to construct my life with quality materials. I want to pass the final test when You ask me, 'What did you do with My Son? What did you do with what I gave you?'"

God, help us to recognize eternity so it can shape how we live today. It's in Jesus name we pray. And everybody said together: Amen.

